

Service Dog 101

NOTE: If you see someone with a dog and want to determine if it is a service animal, at this time, there are **only TWO questions which may be asked, legally:**

1. *Is this a service dog needed due to a disability?*
 - a. *If “YES,” you may not ask about the disability, nor for any verification.*
 - b. *If “NO,” you may continue with further questions; e.g., “Has this dog been approved to be in this location with you as an accommodation for a disability?” In this case, feel free to check with the Office of Accessibility for verification.*
2. *If yes to #1, then: What task is it trained to perform? (You may not ask for a demonstration.)*

If it is obvious that the dog is a service dog (e.g. Guide Dog), no questions may be asked. A service dog is not required to wear identification indicating it is a service dog. Any such verification is not proof that the dog is a service dog.

- **A Service Dog is a working animal.** The service dog and its owner are a working team. A service dog remains with its owner while the service dog is working.
- **Do Not Pet** the service dog when it is working. Petting distracts the dog from its job and the owner could get hurt. Also, don't call the service dog by name when it is working: this, too, is distracting.
- Do not offer the service dog food or other distracting treats without the owner's permission.
- Service dog owners do not want people to be afraid of their service dogs. Service dogs are well trained and under their owners' command. Sometimes a service dog will make a mistake and must be corrected in order to maintain its training. This correction usually involves a verbal admonishment coupled with a leash correction. Service dog owners have been taught the appropriate correction methods to use with their dogs.
- **Service dogs go where their owners go:** inside campus buildings and offices, inside the residence halls and rooms, in classrooms, in public restrooms, and in Thomson Cafeteria, for example. When the student service dog owner is seated, the service dog will stay by the student's side. The service dog will sit at the student's feet, next to the student's chair, or sometimes – if the service dog can fit – underneath the student's chair. Occasionally, a service dog is trained to provide pressure therapy to the owner. In such cases, the animal may appear to jump on the student or need to jump on adjacent furniture to perform this task. Others may be small and carried in chest packs to be able to detect changes in insulin levels, heart rate, etc.
- Service dog owners are trained to care for their service dogs: to feed, bathe, and clean up after them.
- In public places within the state of South Carolina, service dogs "in training" should be treated the same as trained service dogs.
- Please contact the Office of Accessibility at 803-323-3290 if you have questions or concerns about service dogs at Winthrop University. But remember: don't pet the service dog when it is working.